DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 181 458 CS 205 349

AUTHOR Isaacs, L. M.; Stennett, R. G.
TITLE Morphographic Spelling: Preliminary Evaluation. Research Report 79-07.
INSTITUTION London Board of Education (Ontario). Educational Research Services.
PUB DATE 79
NOTE 5p.

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Educational Research; Elementary Secondary Education; Informal Assessment; Spelling; *Spelling Instruction

ABSTRACT

Although students definitely improve their spelling skills when exposed to the Morphographic Spelling program (a set of rules that helps students analyze virtually any spoken English word for correct spelling), there are several questions about the program still unanswered. A limited study in London, England, to determine the effectiveness of using the program involved ten teachers and 137 students from grades five through eight including students in special learning disability classes. The students were pretested and posttested using the Morrison-McCall spelling scale and instructed in Morphographic Spelling for a period of six to nine months. As a result, 115 students made at least one month's gain in spelling skills. Unanswered questions about the program include whether the growth noted is educationally significant, whether students can realistically achieve the program's claim of learning to spell in excess of 12,000 words by the end of the program, and whether the program's single focus on teaching students to spell, eliminating other significant language skills such as word derivations, would necessitate using the program in addition to, rather than instead of, regular spelling programs. (AEA)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

The attached Document, CS205349 , is five pages or less in length, the minimum set by CERIC, but it is recommended for further ERIC processing because RCS evaluators judged it to be clearly outstanding.

ED181458

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION

THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY

MORPHOGRAPHIC SPELLING: PRELIMINARY EVALUATION

L. M. Isaacs & R. G. Stennett, Ph.D.
Educational Research Services
London Board of Education

Research Report 79-07

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
The Board of Education for the City of London
TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH SERVICES

R & D * program evaluation * literature reviews
in-service * consultation * statistics * curriculum development

The Board of Education for the City of London

CS205349

MORPHOGRAPHIC SPELLING: PRELIMINARY EVALUATION

L. M. Isaacs & R. G. Stennett, Ph.D.

Educational Research Services
London Board of Education

In recent years many new programs designed to teach elementary school students to spell have been developed and marketed throughout North America. One of these is Morphographic Spelling, produced by the Engelmann-Becker Corporation and marketed by Science Research Associates. Morphographic Spelling is a direct instructional program designed for students in grades 4-12 who demonstrate mastery of basic sound-symbol relationships but who misspell a variety of English words. The program is used with entire classrooms at all recommended levels but may also be used with smaller groups if appropriate.

Morphographic analysis is essentially a set of rules that provides a framework students can use to spell different words. These rules allow virtually any spoken English word to be analyzed in a way that allows a student to produce an acceptable spelling. The two objectives of the Morphographic Spelling program, therefore, are: (1) to provide the student with a workable set of general rules that will serve all his spelling needs and (2) to fit the analysis scheme into a smooth program. The authors of Morphographic Spelling maintain that, after completing the 140 daily 20-minute lessons, a student will be able to spell over 12,000 words including most words on the complete Dolch word lists and most commonly misspelled high school and college words. The student will also be able to apply the Morphographic analyses to words not taught in the program.

Because there is considerable interest in all direct instruction programs in the London school system and because training is available in all of the programs, Morphographic Spelling is already being used in a number of classes. Since there has been no evaluation of Morphographic Spelling by the authors, the publishers, or independent researchers, it seemed important to review this program before it has widespread use. Because of limited resources a full-scale evaluation of Morphographic Spelling during the 78-79 school year was impossible. However, this study was undertaken to obtain some indication of what order of results were being demonstrated in classrooms using this spelling program.

METHOD

In order to obtain an indication of how well Morphographic Spelling was working, all teachers currently using Morphographic Spelling were asked to administer List 5 of the Morrison-McCall spelling scale as a pre-test and List 2 as a post-instruction test. Ten teachers provided us with these data. The students taught with Morphographic Spelling came from all grades 5 through 8 and included a number of students in special general learning

disability classes. Almost all of the 137 children who were included in the program were having some difficulty with spelling and all of them met the publisher-specified criteria for inclusion in the program. Instruction with Morphographic Spelling was provided for 6 to 9 months to these students.

Since implementation of the program was not monitored, there was no way of assessing how well the program was instituted in the various classrooms.

RESULTS

The students taught with Morphographic Spelling had a mean pre-test score on the Morrison-McCall Spelling Test of 4.57 and a mean post-test score of 5.37. Of the 137 involved in this project, 115 made at least one months gain in spelling skills between pre and post-testing. Eleven students made no gain and 11 students regressed in their spelling score.

DISCUSSION

The results indicate that the students definitely make growth in terms of their spelling skills when exposed to the Morphographic Spelling program. The question is whether or not this growth is educationally significant. Do the students, in fact, do better using Morphographic Spelling than they might do using any other spelling program. This question is, of course, impossible to answer without a full scale study involving a control group receiving the traditional spelling program.

Quite apart from this study, there are several unanswered questions about Morphographic Spelling. The authors of the program claim that the student will learn to spell in excess of 12,000 words by the end of the program. This suggests that the students who completed Morphographic Spelling in a single year would no longer need to study spelling as part of their language program. Our results do not seem to support this position. Although the students make gains, they are not completely trained.

Another pertinent issue is whether the program should be taught in addition to, or instead of, the regular spelling programs. Most traditional programs teach a number of significant language skills in addition to spelling. Morphographic Spelling has a single focus . . . to teach the student to spell. It does not deal with grammar or word derivations or any other similar language-related skills.

If such other skills, normally taught to enhance students' understanding and appreciation of language are to be covered, it seems apparent that Morphographic Spelling needs to be carefully integrated with the traditional programs.

RECOMMENDATIONS

A full-scale controlled evaluation should be made of Morphographic Spelling. This evaluation should include experimental groups, as well as control groups of students who are involved in other kinds of spelling programs. Several different 'kinds' of students, all of whom might be eligible for Morphographic Spelling should be included.

Such an evaluation should include study of all of the language skills normally taught in traditional spelling programs and a careful examination of the 'overlap,' or lack of it, between traditional and Morphographic programs. Finally, suitable formative evaluation of both traditional and Morphographic programs is required.